



# **Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board**

## **School Accreditation**

This report is prepared following two accreditation visits made on behalf of the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board. It considers how far the school follows the criteria set out in “The Guide to the EYFS in Montessori Settings” (2008) and subsequent 2012 revisions. The second visit sought to assess the progress made on the recommendations set out in the report from the first visit as well as any further findings made during the second visit.

The report does not address the standards and quality issues which are the responsibility of the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) which reports separately. Also the report does not provide any assessment of financial aspects of the school.

### **Eden Montessori Nursery**

Kensington United Reformed Church, Allen Street, Kensington, London W8 6BL

Date of the first accreditation visit: 10 March 2014.

Date of the second accreditation visit: 23 May 2014.

This accreditation report relates to the provision for children aged 2 to 5 years.

#### **Description of the school**

Eden Montessori Nursery was established in 2010, and is privately owned. It is situated in a church hall in the London Borough of Kensington and Chelsea. The nursery is open term times only from 9:00 to 15:45, Monday to Friday. Part- or full-time care is offered, with morning sessions from 9:00 to 12:00 and afternoon sessions from 12:00 to 15:45. The children attending are in the 2 to 5 year age group.

The church hall consists of two separate rooms, each with its own entrance area. These large rooms form two Montessori classrooms, which are the ‘yellow class’ catering for the 2 year olds and the ‘blue class’ for the 2½ to 5 year age group. There are toilet facilities for both classrooms, as well as one large kitchen, a staff/meeting room and an office. The nursery has a small, paved outdoor space with play facilities, which leads directly from the ‘yellow class’ and it has sole use of this during the week. Since the first accreditation visit the ‘blue class’ has gained more access to the church’s front garden on a daily basis.

There are currently 39 children on roll, with the maximum number of 20 children attending in the ‘blue class’ and 12 children in the ‘yellow class’. Eden Montessori Nursery offers healthy snacks for the children, and cooked lunches are prepared on site by the nursery’s cook. The nursery is able to support children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), special dietary requirements and children who speak English as an additional language.

There are eight members of staff of whom six hold Montessori qualifications, including the



proprietor who is involved in the daily running of the setting. The manager holds Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), with an MA in education, and is currently completing the Montessori diploma course. In each classroom there are three teachers working with the children on a full-time basis and one working mornings only.

On the day of the second accreditation visit there were 14 children attending in the 'blue class' and eight children attending in the 'yellow class' for the morning session. During the afternoon there were 15 children in total attending in the 2 to 5 year age group.

Since the first accreditation visit a baby and toddler area has been created, which is called the 'red class', it operates from Tuesdays to Thursdays for three hours in the mornings. This provision has not been assessed as part of this accreditation.

## Summary

Eden Montessori Nursery offers a spacious and welcoming Montessori learning environment for families and their children, where parents, children and nursery staff are given opportunities to contribute to a strong community spirit. The nursery's aim is to develop effective partnership work with parents through Montessori parenting classes and workshops, so that the individual child is guided towards developing confidence and independence at home and at nursery in order to prepare him/her for later learning experiences.

The children are free to choose activities and explore in the carefully prepared environment, where all members of staff observe the children's individual needs and interests, supported by a well implemented key person system. The materials are carefully selected and are suitable for the children's ages and stages of development in both classrooms. The environment and the materials are well maintained by all members of staff, and the Montessori areas of learning are linked to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Framework through the use of an electronic record keeping system, from which information on the child's progress is accessible to parents on-line through a secure log-in system.

Eden Montessori Nursery places strong emphasis on offering the children opportunities to explore beyond their nursery environment on a daily basis through field trips to the local park, library and museum as part of the afternoon sessions. The younger age group has direct access to the small outdoor space from their classroom. In response to the recommendation from the first accreditation visit, staff have also created a stimulating outdoor space for the 'blue class' in the church hall's front garden; this is offered as part of the daily provision, with a free-flow system now operating between this class's indoor and outdoor learning environments.

All members of staff are enthusiastic, experienced and knowledgeable about the Montessori philosophy and are committed to continuous professional development. Strong teamwork enables all members of staff to reflect meaningfully on their Montessori practice at Eden.

***The school provides an education in accordance with the principles of the Montessori approach and environment and merits accreditation by the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board.***



- It is recommended that the school continues to reflect on its practice in order to ensure that high standards are maintained.

### **Philosophy:**

Eden Montessori Nursery places strong emphasis on following the individual child's needs and interests with a gentle introduction to the Montessori environment for the 2 year old age group in the 'yellow class', where the children have an established daily routine to help them develop confidence and independence in preparation for their transition to the 'blue class'. The children are free to select activities of their choice during a two and a half to three hour work cycle in both classrooms during the morning session. The teachers observe the children in order to be able to accommodate and support their needs, as well as encourage them to explore and discover through child-initiated activities within this well prepared environment. The children confidently communicate with adults when they need help.

The nursery's aims, philosophy and principles are reviewed regularly and are defined in writing in the "Mission Statement", which is available to parents through the website. All members of staff are aware of their roles and responsibilities, as defined in writing in the "Employee Handbook" document.

### **Learning and Development:**

The younger children in the 'yellow class' follow an established daily routine with allocated snack and outdoor time during the morning session, but the children are free to choose their activities within the Montessori areas of learning during the entire two and a half hour morning work-cycle. The children have direct access from this 'yellow class' to the small, paved outdoor area, which has a range of play equipment suited to this age group.

The older children, who are in the 'blue class', are free to choose their activities within the Montessori areas of learning indoors during the three hour morning work cycle, and they now also enjoy free-flow access to their stimulating outdoor environment, which is accessible during the morning and afternoon sessions. Children confidently communicate with their key person or another teacher if they want to engage with an adult in their chosen activity indoors and out.

In both classrooms the children choose what they want to do independently and engage in child-initiated activities as a group or individually. The teachers communicate with each other effectively during sessions and are able to follow and accommodate the children's needs. A well implemented key person system enables staff to monitor their key children's progress, by using 'My Montessori Child' software, which covers all areas of learning within the EYFS and links these areas to Montessori activities. These records also link to the child's possible next steps. The 'My Montessori Child' system is accessible to parents on-line. The assessments of each child's progress are also kept on this system and include the mandatory two year old progress check.

Topic based, adult-led activities are offered in both rooms at the end of the morning: the children are invited to sing, listen to a story or practice yoga, with this group lasting for approximately 20 minutes. These activities are optional for the children and they can continue



with their chosen work if they prefer.

Each classroom plans its weekly activities separately, but long-term plans are drawn up as a team. Additional activities such as French, sport and cooking are on offer each week, again for those children who wish to join these activities. Eden Montessori Nursery also places strong emphasis on giving children the opportunity to explore and discover beyond the nursery environment through daily outings offered as part of the afternoon sessions. These outings to the local park, playground or museum are offered to those children who stay all day.

The deputy manager is the appointed SENCo, whose role it is to closely monitor a child if any concerns arise. These concerns are documented, and an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) is implemented for children with special educational needs. Eden Montessori Nursery is adept at offering excellent provision for children who speak English as an additional language (EAL); a well established system enables nursery staff to support these children using a Language Translation form that is completed by the parents on their child's entry. All members of staff have weekly meetings to discuss additional needs and keep up to date with SEN and EAL procedures in order to be able to plan for each child's next steps in full. Eden Montessori Nursery has also developed highly effective multi-agency work with the local authority and other health specialists such as health visitors and speech therapists in order to be able to fully support children and their families. Transition from the 'yellow class' to the 'blue class' occurs when a child is ready for the next stage of learning and this readiness is closely monitored.

### **Prepared Environment: resources and materials**

Eden Montessori Nursery offers a well prepared Montessori environment for the 2 to 5 year age group, with carefully selected materials suitable for the children's ages and stages of development.

The 'yellow class' offers a wide range of sensory and cultural activities for the younger children, as well as art and craft, story, role-play and constructive play areas. The 'blue class' provides sensory, cultural, creative, language, mathematics and practical life materials for the children. There are also areas for stories, art and craft, role-play, ICT and an indoor planting area that is known to the children as the Ecology Centre. The apparatus in the classes is easily accessible for the children and arranged on shelves at the child's level in an orderly manner. In both classrooms the children are given the opportunity to select and prepare their snack in the allocated snack area, where plates, glasses and washing-up facilities are provided.

The small paved outdoor area which is directly accessible to the children from the 'yellow class' has equipment available to encourage balancing games, sand and water play and role-play.

Since the first accreditation visit all members of staff have made more free-flow access available to the children between the indoor and outdoor environments by also using the church hall's front garden, and they have created a stimulating environment with sensory, practical life, physical and creative activities on offer. The children also have opportunities to explore outdoors beyond the nursery garden by visiting the local park and playground, including the sports facilities in the local park.

The indoor and outdoor areas of learning are well maintained and regularly checked by staff in both classrooms in order to help ensure that the materials are safe, suitable and appropriate to



support learning and development.

### **Montessori practice: independence, including independence at home, freedom, respect**

The nursery has a well-established daily routine that supports the children in becoming confident and independent within their environment. They access learning resources freely and spontaneously. The children are encouraged to return the materials to the shelves after finishing an activity. They hang their coats on their pegs independently and change into their indoor shoes or slippers before entering the classroom. They also self-register on arrival.

The children select and prepare their own snack in the 'blue class' while the younger ones in the 'yellow class' are supervised and guided by the teacher during their preparation of snack. During the snack and lunch time routines washing-up facilities are provided for the children to clean their plates and cups after use. Hygiene routines are also promoted throughout the day, supported by picture cards which indicate what to do. During the lunch time routine the older children are encouraged to set the tables and the children from both classrooms come together to eat.

Eden Montessori Nursery has developed strong partnership work with parents through their Montessori workshops and parenting classes in order to promote the child's growing independence at home and at nursery. Each individual child's needs, including those relevant to toilet training, are observed and accommodated.

Staff treat and welcome all children equally and show regard for their culture, background and ability by celebrating their achievements and differences. They also encourage the children to develop respect for others, and children in the 'blue class' have the opportunity to meet and sing for elderly people in the residential home that is situated next door to the nursery premises. The daily outings also give the children the opportunity to begin to learn about road safety.

The carefully prepared environment encourages the children to respect each other's space by sharing and turn taking. The adults are good role models who encourage positive behaviour throughout the day, including during meal times.

### **Montessori practice: Classroom management**

The team in each classroom plans together and staff are fully aware of their roles and responsibilities. Classroom practice is reviewed weekly in order to promote continued effective practice for this mixed age group through the provision of a well-established daily routine, with a two and a half to three hour work-cycle in the morning and additional activities such as outings, cooking and sports during the afternoon sessions.

A well-managed key person system is implemented, which is documented and displayed in the classrooms. As the majority of the 2 year olds only attend half day sessions there are no sleeping facilities in the 'yellow class', but if a child is unwell or tired he/she is comforted by an adult in the 'story' area, where soft cushions are provided. Policies and procedures are reviewed once a year by the team. In each classroom the teachers have a designated area that they are



responsible for maintaining and there is a lead teacher in each, who is responsible for overseeing the daily routine and classroom procedures.

Children are observed daily by all teachers, and in each class staff are assigned specific daily roles that include observing, presenting and offering general support for that day. This division of roles is planned in advance. All members of staff rotate their responsibilities in the classroom, which enables staff to have full involvement in the overall running of the daily routine and contact with all the children in their room.

The strong team work facilitates a caring and harmonious working environment for both the adults and the children. This was evident at both accreditation visits in the way that the children played, as a group or individually, during the sessions.

### **Montessori Practice: links with parents, including reports and records**

Partnership work with parents is a particular strength of practice at Eden Montessori Nursery. Parents have access to information about the setting's ethos and Montessori philosophy through the Mission Statement, which is on the nursery's website, and in the Parent Handbook. A Montessori parenting course and workshop is also available every term. Eden Montessori has an open door policy that invites parents to observe the daily routine and the Montessori approach, and special events also offer the opportunity for families to become more familiar with the Montessori principles.

If a child speaks English as an additional language parents fill in the Language Translation form, this enables staff to familiarise themselves with common words which the child may use in his/her first language whilst at nursery. The Parent Handbook, Comment Book and Policy Folder are displayed for parents in the entrance hall. Parents are aware of the staffing structure at Eden Montessori, and this information is also displayed on the nursery's news board.

The My Montessori Child on-line system keeps parents updated about their child's daily activities and progress at Eden Montessori and they can view the weekly lunch menu and find out about events and future plans through regular newsletters. Parents have the opportunity to verbally exchange information on a daily basis and are also able to exchange written dialogue with the child's key person through the My Montessori Child system so that they can inform staff of any significant changes in their child's learning and development at home. Parents are also given a Progress Record Form, which is used to exchange information with the child's key person. Home visits are offered to parents if further consultation is required with the key person, in order to fully support the child's development both at home and at nursery. Parent consultations are held at the nursery once a term at which they can discuss their child's progress and help plan their next steps together with the key person.

Through the My Montessori Child assessment system a Transition Report is prepared and given to the family, along with the child's other records, when they leave for a new school.

Since the first accreditation visit staff have created the 'red class' for babies and toddlers, which operates from Tuesdays to Thursdays for three hours in the mornings to help these children settle into the Montessori environment before they start attending the 'yellow class'.

During both accreditation visits parents commented on how useful the information they have



received is in enabling them to implement some aspects of the Montessori philosophy with their children at home, such as practical life and creative activities. They also commented on how much they appreciate the calm, welcoming atmosphere and the home-from-home care that Eden Montessori Nursery offers.

### **Staffing:**

Induction and supervision procedures are effective at Eden Montessori. A rigorous one week induction programme is conducted by the manager or the proprietor; new staff are provided with an Employee Handbook, they attend in-house Montessori induction training and are assigned a mentor. These new staff members have a monthly meeting during their probation period, with clear targets, goals and support set out.

The staff supervision system gives the team the opportunity to monitor and develop provision for the benefit of all, and staff appraisals are held twice a year with the manager. Staff meetings are held once a week and are minuted. These discussions can link in with the nursery's development plans. All staff contribute to planning, self-evaluation and development in the setting, and peer observations enable staff to reinforce the effective team work and reflect on their practice.

The team is very well qualified. Of the eight members of staff, six hold Montessori qualifications, including the proprietor. The manager holds QTS with an MA in education and is currently working towards a Montessori diploma. The deputy manager holds a Montessori diploma and is studying for a degree in early years. Three other members of staff hold a Montessori diploma. One member of staff holds a BA in Early Childhood Education and another, who has a Montessori certificate and NVQ Level 3 in Early Years, is also studying for a Montessori diploma. Since the first accreditation visit a new member of staff who holds a Montessori qualification and a degree has joined the team in the 'yellow class'.

Staff qualifications and further training are reviewed once a month, which is documented in the Staff Training and Development portfolio. The proprietor and manager promote continuous professional development amongst the team, which helps to ensure that all members of staff have a shared understanding and commitment to the strong Montessori ethos of this setting.

Name of Assessor: Andrea Dalling

Date of reports:

First visit – 13<sup>th</sup> March 2014.

Second visit – 26<sup>th</sup> May 2014.